for 10 years in the first 15 years to developers of SEZs' Income Tax holiday for 5 years, 50% tax exemption for 2 years and 50% of re-investments out of profits earned for three years to SEZ unit.

(c) Exports from SEZs has been steadily on the increase and exports by SEZ units during 2002-2003 were of the order of Rs. 10,056.62 crores as compared to Rs. 9189.55 crores during the previous year.

Free trade agreement between India and Thailand

742. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and Thailand are negotiating for concluding free trade agreement;

(b) the existing position of balance of trade between the two countries; and

(c) the items which India imports from Thailand and items which India exports?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI SATYABRATA MOOKHERJEE): (a) A Joint Negotiating Group (JNG) has been set up for drafting a Framework Agreement of India-Thailand Free Trade Agreement covering goods, services and investments. The Framework Agreement is expected to be signed in October, 2003 during the Prime Minister's visit to Thailand.

(b) The present position of the bilateral trade between India and Thailand is as follows:—

(US $ Million)

Year	Exports	Imports	Total	Balance of Trade
2001-02	632.58	423.05	1055.63	(+)209.53
2001-02(Apr-Feb)	567.58	392.76	960.34	(+)174.82
2002-03(Apr-Feb)	653.54	342.58	996.12	(+)310.96

(c) The major items which India imports from Thailand are electronic goods, machinery except electrical and electronics, artificial resigns,

plastic materials etc. other commodities, manmade filament/spun yarn (incl. waste), other textile yarn, fabrics, made-up articles, iron and steel, vegetable oils fixed (edible), pearls, precious/semi precious stones and electrical machinery except electronic and the major items which India exports to Thailand are gem and jewellery, oil meals, primary and semi-finished iron and steel, inorganic/organic/agro chemicals, marine products, drugs, pharmaceuticals and fine chemicals, machinery and instruments, dyes/intermediates and coal tar chemicals, manufacture of metals and non-ferrous metals.

Rubber Import

743. SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken any decisions to allow rubber import;

(b) if so, the reasons which prompted Government to arrive at such a decision;

(c) whether Government consider to rectify the technical defects crept in the orders of rubber import of safeguard the interest of the rubber cultivators; and

(d) whether Government consider to review the decision?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI SATYABRATA MOOKHERJEE): (a) to (d) Import of Natural Rubber has been made free *w.e.f.* 1.4.2001 as part of the removal of Quantitative Restrictions from large number of items for imports. Under the EXIM Policy, exporters are entitled to import inputs duty free for the manufacture of items for export under the Advance Licence Scheme as per the Standard Input Output Norms (SION) fixed for a particular item. Certain restrictions had been put in place for import of Natural Rubber duty free under this scheme. The Public Notices and the Policy Circulars imposing such restrictions have been set aside by the Bombay High Court. The SLP filed by the Government against this order was not admitted by the Supreme Court. As a result, restrictions imposed on import of Natural Rubber under the Advance Licence Scheme stand removed.